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Students' Views On Peer Assessment & Professionalism: Knowing When To “Switch It On”

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Introduction

Peers witness routine behaviour, rather than the modified or cautious behaviour often displayed when classmates are being directly observed, thus giving a unique perspective¹.

Peer assessment is utilised in undergraduate assessment of professionalism. Professionalism is subjective, not easily defined, nor quantified. However, there are numerous professional guidelines issued to students when they commence their studies². How much understanding students have of these guidelines, and their perceived relevance, is little known.

This study determined how medical students perceived professionalism and explored their views on peer nomination as an assessment tool for measuring professionalism

Method

Ethical approval was granted by the University's ethics committee.

Participants received information sheets and consented for data acquisition, storage and dissemination.

12 undergraduate medical students participated in focus groups after completing a peer nomination assessment. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Transcripts were coded using a grounded theory approach.

Open coding was done by all authors independently, and axial and selective coding was conducted with negotiation

Results

Theme 1 professionalism, the key subthemes were perceptions of attributes of professionalism, (ir)relevance of professionalism to students and teaching & learning of professionalism.

Theme 2 peer assessment, the 5 subthemes which emerged were the use of an online environment for voting, eliminating anonymity, receiving prior warning, opportunity to justify choices and participation promoting reflection

Conclusion

Students appear to know that professionalism should be shown in an academic situation; however they feel that as students they should be able to “get away with it”. Thus, students regard professionalism as only being relevant in a clinical context, and call for leniency in preclinical years, going against the guidance from *Good Medical Practice*. Students are accepting of peer nomination as an assessment tool for measuring professionalism in undergraduate medical students; preferring this to be conducted online, with

the opportunity to justify their decisions. Students report peer assessment as a driver for reflection on their own behaviour.

This study will be expanded to include Durham University's current cohort and students at the University of Liverpool.